

Genesis 1:1-2; IN THE BEGINNING

In every theology textbook I have ever seen, the question was asked, “Who should study theology?” Is it just for theologians? I say it isn’t. Theology is defined as – the study of God. Therefore, we are all to study theology and thereby, all of us should be theologians – at least in the most basic sense of the word.

We have been given a collection of books that we call the Bible. This collection, or canon claims to be the revelation of God. This is a stark claim. If it is what it claims to be, then we should see proof.

Two or three years ago, while eating lunch with a group of pastors at a conference in Stone Mountain, a large group of Mormon missionaries came into the restaurant. We invited one of them to sit with us. He took us up on the offer. We then asked him a few questions and he began to tell us about Mormonism. He of course tried to link Mormonism to the Bible – especially when he found himself to be surrounded by Christian pastors. I wanted to make it clear that there was a big distinction between Mormonism and Christianity as well as between the book of Mormon and the Bible. Once again, if a book that claims to be both holy and a revelation of God is true then we should be able to see evidence of its truth claims.

I asked him to give me a cursory description of the history of the American continent as it is related in the book of Mormon. According to Joseph Smith there were two great cultures that lived here. One of which was made up of descendants of the so-called lost tribes of Israel. It was a very advanced culture whereas the Native Americans were thought to be inferior, but eventually conquered the more advanced culture. This all culminated in a great battle where over two million men died in a battle fought with steel weapons and armor. It was a great slaughter.

That location is the Hill Cumorah in New York State. The Mormon Church owns that piece of land.

Why am I telling you this? Well, if the book of Mormon were true we should be able to see evidence of that battle. There should be thousands of artifacts that have been excavated from that spot. However, nothing has ever been found there. In fact, BYU has all but closed down its archaeology

department due to the fact that nothing has ever been found to support the claims of the Book of Mormon concerning the history of the Americas.

Today is a new start. I am starting as the new pastor. And we, as a church are starting at the beginning of the Bible. We are on a quest to be theologians of sorts. We are going to continue the study of God by starting from the beginning. And if whilst on this journey and study, we don't find proof to back up the Bible's claims, then we are just wasting our time.

1 Cor. 15:19

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

However, if we find this book to be true, then we have no choice but to submit to the God that has given us this truth.

Since this is the beginning for all of us in one-way or another, I would like to start with the book of Genesis.

The History of Creation

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

The word Genesis means, "***beginnings***". Genesis is derived from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word ***toledoth***, which means "generations". Genesis is perhaps the most important book in the Bible. The first eleven chapters are the foundation for all of the major doctrines of Christianity such as sin and atonement, redemption, grace, faith, and justification, as well as others. The very purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry is contained in chapter three. The very first hint of the Gospel is given in chapter three. Without this portion of scripture, the rest of the canon struggles to make sense.

The Bible is a unique book from the very outset.

Gen. 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

From the very first verse the Bible distinguishes itself from all other so-called holy books. Our view of origins is distinctly different from anyone else's. The 10 words of verse 1 make 4 distinct points.

- 1) There is a creator God
- 2) The universe had a beginning
- 3) The universe was created from nothing
- 4) The universe was created according to God's will

In the beginning, God...

From the very outset we see that the Bible simply proclaims God. There is no attempt to prove God. It is a given. (*Atheism is actually a rather recent phenomenon.*) God created everything in the beginning. God wasn't created in the beginning. In fact, if God had been created, He would cease to be God. From the very first verse of the Bible we see that God is outside of time, He is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. This is important. It actually has to be this way.

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

Our God is infinite. He had no beginning. Everything that was made was done so by God. Jesus in fact, created it - as we see here. So, John reiterates that there was that which was created as well as the God-head which transcended the creation.

If God had a beginning then He had a cause. If He had a cause then something or someone is greater than He is. He would then have to defer to that other someone or something, which would disqualify Him from being God.

The Hebrew word that is here-translated God, is *elohim*. It normally is the plural for God or gods, but is used here with the singular form of the verb ***created***, and therefore is to be considered in the singular. We cannot use this verse as a proof text for the trinity, but it is interesting to note its use here in the first verse of the Bible.

We read of Elohim (God) in verse one. We read of the Spirit in verse two. And in John 1 we read that Jesus – the Word (Logos) was in the beginning and actually performed the creative acts. In the first two verses we have the Trinity.

The question has been asked, “Why did God create man?” And the answer is usually something to the effect that man was created so God would have someone to love. That, however, is incorrect. Man wasn’t created so God would have someone to love. God already had someone to love. God wasn’t alone. We read that in John 1:1-3.

God is love

1 John 4:7-11

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for ***God is love***. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

John tells us that God is love. We aren’t told just that God loves. Rather we read that God ***IS*** love! There is a big difference. Love isn’t just an attribute of God. It is His make-up. It isn’t only one part of Him. It encompasses Him. He IS love!! It’s like saying, “Abe IS big!”

If God were alone before creation, He couldn’t BE love. Why? Because you can’t love, (in the truest sense) yourself. There has to be given away. You cannot give it to yourself. There has to be a recipient other than yourself. So, if God was alone or to put it another way, if there wasn’t a Trinity, then God couldn’t BE love. He could have shown love once man was created, but that isn’t what we read in scripture. Therefore, we read of the Trinity and see that so far the creation account is logical and consistent with the rest of scripture.

“***In the beginning***”... records the creation of time. The universe had a beginning. Before this there was no time. This is almost unimaginable to us

because we are so accustomed to living in time. God however exists outside of time. Think of the way a line is represented in your geometry textbook. There is an arrow at each end because a line has no beginning and no end. It goes on forever. Now think of how a “ray” is represented. It starts with a dot and then has an arrow at the other end. This is how most people think of time. However, if we are going to be Biblically accurate we have to think of time as a line segment. A segment starts with a dot and ends with a dot. There was a beginning and one day there will be an end. Then we will move into eternity.

The fact that verse one states that the universe had a beginning is unique among the creation myths. The other cosmogonies of the Middle East claimed that the universe had always existed. Only divine authorship would be audacious enough to make this claim. This kind of statement would not have come from the mind of man – especially in that part of the world.

And if the creator brought everything into existence, then by necessity He must exist outside of creation.

II Timothy 1:8,9

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

Eph. 1:3,4

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...

1 Peter 1:18-20

18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and

without spot. 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you...

John 17:24

24 “ Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

He is the first cause. He has no cause. Therefore He always was and there was none before Him and therefore there is none greater than He.

The third major point is that God made everything from nothing. This is referred to as creation ‘ex nihilo’ or creation out of nothing. God “spoke” everything into creation. There was no pre-existing matter of energy. Once again Genesis is distinguished from all other creation accounts. All the rest have a god making the universe out stuff that was just lying around.

There are more than 300 creation and flood myths worldwide, but the Bible is the only one that gives an account of creation *ex-nihilo*. This is a Latin phrase meaning, “out of nothing”. The Bible proclaims that God created everything out of nothing. There was nothing that existed prior to creation other than God Himself. All other accounts have their deities not creating the world but making it from matter that already existed.

There is the story of the scientists that felt as though they no longer needed God, so they approached Him and told Him so. They stated that due to the latest technology, they were now able to create things in the laboratory and no longer needed a ‘higher power’. Therefore they challenged God to a contest. Each side would create a world. God agreed to the contest and graciously allowed the scientists to go first.

The scientists then turned to leave the room.

“Where are you going” God asked?

“We are going outside to collect some dirt to begin the process,” they stated.

“That is unacceptable!” God replied. “You have to get your own dirt!”

There is a great gulf between our God and the creation stories of the pagans.

The word translated “heaven” in Hebrew is “*shamayim*” and carries the meaning of expanse or space. The Hebrew word for earth is “*eretz*” and

carries the meaning of matter. Science tells us that these three things, time, matter, and space are the building blocks of the universe. The Bible lists them from the very outset. This concept is known as the space/ time/ matter continuum. These three terms constitute our universe. Science says that the three things have to exist in order for our universe to exist as it does. But science also says that one more thing is necessary – energy. Let’s look at verse 2.

Genesis 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Here we see that in the very first moments of creation, perhaps milliseconds the earth had no form. There was no light of which to speak. The earth was just a formless, churning mass of water and other matter. Think of a big pot of churning cake batter where all the ingredients are present, but they have yet to come together as a cake. Then the “B” portion of the verse states that the “Spirit of God” *moved* upon the face of the waters. This is the first mention of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. He hovered or vibrated over the waters. Motion implies energy. The Holy Spirit energized the matter that God created. We must be careful not to go beyond the text here and postulate a “big bang”. The creation account is fairly detailed and doesn’t record an explosion here.

- Have you ever seen an explosion create order?
- Experiment: a clean garage + time does not equal a Mercedes.
- Keep adding time and you have the basis for evolutionary theory

This movement is energy. The final thing scientists tell us must exist before the universe, as we know it can exist. And we find all four of those ingredients in the first two verses of the Bible. So far our Bible is passing the test – the same test the Book of Mormon failed. We can observe the universe and what we see is consistent with the Bible’s claims.

And finally, we see that everything was created according to God’s will. We see the beginning of purpose and order. We see time; space, matter, and energy are coalescing under the hand of God as the building blocks of everything in creation.

Rev. 4:11

***11 “You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created.”***

We have gathered here this morning as a body of believers. Some of us may have come only for what we feel we can get out of the service. Some may have come just for the music. Some may have come for the fellowship or mental stimulation of the service. All of those things are good, but the truth is that all we know and all we are, were created to give God the glory.

I was raised in a Christian home. You couldn't have asked for a better Christian family and upbringing than the one I had. But like many young people I went astray for a while in my teen years. I had questions for which I couldn't find answers. This frustrated me. I felt that there were holes in what I had been taught. This was a stumbling block for me. I was taught for the most part by Christians. But they were unable to combat what I had been fed by the world as undeniable fact.

Then one day, I'm not sure exactly how – a book came into my possession that answered my questions. It was a book on creation. And for me, the light came on! My life turned around. It may have been something else that grabbed you. Some people don't like science. But over the last 20 plus years of ministry, even when I went to Nepal to teach Bible, most of the questions asked have been about the first 11 chapters of Genesis. This is the biggest stumbling block for unbelievers today.

I want to come back to the definition of theology – the study of God. Who should study theology? All of us should. Theology was once considered to be the greatest of all academic pursuits. It has now dropped way down the list. But for the Christian – the one that claims to have been born again. The person that claims to want an intimate relationship with the creator of the universe HAS to be a student of theology if he is at all sincere.

So I am asking you to join me on a journey to get to know the creator of the universe in a way and at a depth as never before. Will you join me in the study of God?

If so, we will never run out of reasons to give God all the glory.